

Disaster PREP

Plan, Respond, Exercise & Prepare

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Disaster Guidebooks: Where Are They Now?

By Debra Hendricks

The disaster planning guidebooks developed by DMH's Office of Disaster Services (ODS) are being met with positive feedback. The guidebooks – one for individuals and the other for those who provide care and services to the individuals – are designed to provide an easy path to an emergency plan.

ODS's Developmental Disabilities Preparedness Coordinator has been presenting the guidebooks at conferences and meetings. Attendees at the professional development event for the Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled were enthusiastic about both using the provider guide for themselves and sharing the individual guide with parents and guardians. Attendees at the Missouri State Emergency Management conference commented that this was needed information and were pleased to see this planning effort; they shared their opinion that "call 9-1-1" should not be anyone's emergency plan and this can help everyone make their own plan. Social media metrics have also shown broad appeal with click-through rates at four times the average rate.

The Individual Preparedness Planning Guidebook uses plain language and a question-and-answer format to guide individuals through the items that should be part of their emergency plan. The individual can work through the guidebook, either alone or with assistance, documenting their own specific needs – like speaking boards, eyeglasses, comfort items, medications, etc.

The Provider Planning Guidebook is for anyone providing care to an individual – direct service providers, case managers, and even parents or guardians. The guidebook walks through the same questions in the individual guidebook, asking what the provider needs to support the individual. For example, does the provider have all the contact information for all the people identified by the individual as their own support system.

If you are interested, click or scan the QR code to see the guidebooks, online training, animations, and resources.



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Winter Safety Tips: Stay Safe & Cozy This Year

By Tamara Fish

As the winter season approaches, it's important to keep safety in mind while you celebrate with friends and family. With the chill in the air and the holidays just around the corner, here are some essential tips to help ensure a safe and joyful experience.

First and foremost, maintaining a warm and comfortable home is key. As temperatures drop, it's crucial to check your heating system to ensure it functions efficiently. Regular maintenance can prevent unexpected breakdowns. If you're using space heaters, remember to position them away from flammable materials like curtains or furniture, and always turn them off when you leave the room. Consider investing in a programmable thermostat to help manage your energy usage while keeping your home cozy.

Fire safety should be a top priority, especially during this festive season. If you enjoy decorating with candles or string lights, exercise caution. Flameless candles are a wonderful alternative that can create a warm ambiance without the risk of fire. Always ensure that your holiday lights are turned off when you leave home or go to bed, and check that your smoke detectors are functioning properly with fresh batteries.

Traveling during the winter months can be tricky. Before hitting the road, make sure to check the weather forecast to prepare for any potential storms. A winter-ready vehicle is essential, so ensure your tires are suitable for icy conditions, your antifreeze levels are adequate, and your gas tank is full. An emergency kit in your car can be a lifesaver, especially if you find yourself stuck in adverse weather. Include blankets, non-perishable snacks, a flashlight, and a first aid kit to cover all your bases.

When it comes to winter conditions, slipping hazards are everywhere. It's important to keep walkways clear of snow and ice. Promptly shovel snow from driveways and sidewalks and use salt or sand to prevent icy patches from forming. Wearing appropriate footwear with good traction can make a significant difference when navigating slippery surfaces.

If you have children around during the festivities, be mindful of potential hazards. Small decorations and ornaments should be kept out of reach to prevent choking accidents. Create a safe play area for kids, ensuring it's free from sharp objects and other potential dangers.

Food safety is another vital consideration during holiday gatherings. When preparing festive meals, follow food safety guidelines to prevent illness. Keep raw and cooked foods separate, refrigerate leftovers promptly, and ensure that foods are cooked to the appropriate temperatures. This way, you can enjoy delicious meals without worrying about foodborne illnesses.

Lastly, the winter months can sometimes feel isolating, particularly for those who live alone. Take a moment to check in on neighbors, especially the elderly or those who may need assistance during severe weather. A simple phone call or a friendly visit can brighten someone's day and foster a sense of community.



By following these tips, you can ensure that you and your loved ones enjoy a safe and happy winter season. Embrace the joy of the holidays while prioritizing safety and well-being. Stay warm, stay safe, and savor the beauty of this special time of year!

The Holiday Hustle: Understanding & Overcoming Seasonal Stress

By Alyssa Backes

The holiday season, often seen as a time for joy and celebration, can be a source of significant stress for many. From the pressure of buying the perfect gifts, to juggling family obligations, work commitments, and travel plans, the demands of the season can quickly become overwhelming. Add to that the societal expectations of creating a “perfect” holiday experience, and it’s no wonder that stress levels tend to spike during this time of year. For many, the emotional and physical toll of trying to meet those expectations can lead to burnout, anxiety, and a sense of being disconnected from the true spirit of the holidays. Understanding the causes of holiday stress and how to manage it is key to reclaiming the joy that this season should bring.

Causes of Holiday Stress

- **Financial Pressure:** The pressure to buy gifts, travel, and host events can lead to significant financial strain.
- **Time Management:** The holiday season is often packed with commitments—family gatherings, work parties, school events, and travel—which can leave people feeling stretched thin.
- **Family Dynamics:** Spending time with family can bring about stress due to unresolved conflicts, differing expectations, or complicated relationships.
- **Loneliness or Grief:** The holidays can also trigger feelings of isolation, particularly for those who are dealing with the loss of loved ones or those without a close family network.
- **Unrealistic Expectations:** Media portrayals of the “perfect” holiday can create unrealistic expectations that make people feel like they’re not measuring up, contributing to feelings of inadequacy or disappointment.

Physical and Mental Health Effects

- **Increased Anxiety:** The pressure of balancing obligations, personal expectations, and social events can lead to heightened anxiety levels.
- **Sleep Disruption:** Late-night parties, travel, or just the excitement of the season can disrupt sleep routines, leading to fatigue.
- **Diet and Exercise:** Holiday eating habits often include indulgence in sugary or fatty foods, which can lead to physical discomfort or weight gain, while regular exercise routines can be disrupted.
- **Burnout:** Trying to do everything during the holiday season can lead to mental and physical exhaustion.

Coping Strategies

- **Set Boundaries:** Being realistic about what you can and can’t do helps to manage expectations and avoid overcommitting.
- **Practice Self-care:** Prioritize self-care by getting enough sleep, eating healthily, exercising, and taking time to relax.
- **Simplify:** Cutting back on the number of events or gifts you exchange can help reduce stress.
- **Mindfulness and Relaxation:** Meditation, deep breathing exercises, or yoga can help calm anxiety and improve focus.
- **Delegate:** Don’t hesitate to ask for help from family or friends when preparing for meals, shopping, or organizing events.
- **Focus on Gratitude:** Shifting focus from stressors to positive aspects of the season, like spending quality time with loved ones, can help reduce feelings of overwhelm.



Jenn's Jokes

In loving memory of Jenn Sovanski

What did the pumpkin say after Thanksgiving?

Answer: "Good-pie everyone!"

What has 4 legs and is really loud?

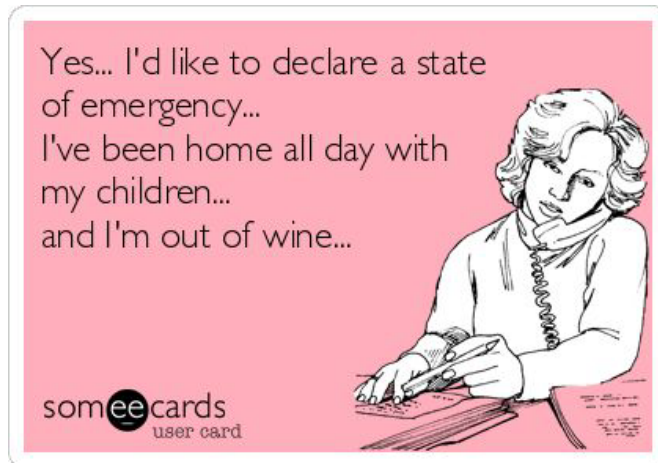
Answer: The kids table!

What did one snowman say to the other?

Answer: Do you smell carrots?

Which hand is best to light the menorah with?

Answer: Neither, it's best to light it with a candle.



Training Opportunities

CPR/AED Training: December 16 from 9:00-11:00 a.m. in DMH Central Office.

Prepare Crisis Management Workshop: January 14-15 from 8:30-4:00 p.m. each day in Joplin.

Psychological First Aid-Training of Trainers: Virtually on January 29-30 from 1:00-5:00 p.m. each day.

Prepare Crisis Management Workshop: February 4-5 from 8:30-4:00 p.m. each day in Kansas City.

NOVA Basic Training: February 25-27 from 8:00-5:00 p.m. each day in Cape Girardeau.

Prepare Crisis Management Workshop: March 5-6 from 8:30-4:00 p.m. each day in St. Peters.

NOVA Basic Training: March 11-13 from 8:00-5:00 p.m. each day in Joplin.

Training Always Available

Psychological First Aid

Trauma-Informed Care

FEMA ICS for Senior & Executive Leadership Management Systems (NIMS):

FEMA ICS 100

FEMA ICS 200

FEMA ICS 700

FEMA ICS 800

Contact Information:

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Social Media: @DMHDisaster

Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | LinkedIn